

BILL HYBELS AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

May 23, 1998 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, wayoflife.org, fbns@wayoflife.org) - The following is excerpted from the excellent book "Occult Invasion: The Subtle Seduction of the World and Church" by Dave Hunt (copyright 1998, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR 97402) --

The differences between an evangelical and a Catholic gospel and understanding of salvation are as great as the distance between heaven and hell. Only one can be right. And to pretend they are the same because they use similar words while ignoring the vast differences in the meaning of those words is to engage in sophistry of the worst order.

Neither Roman Catholic nor evangelical doctrine has changed in the least since the days when both sides were at least honest enough either to die or to kill for their faith. Therefore, when Roman Catholics and evangelicals call one another "brothers and sisters in Christ" and claim they both believe the same gospel, there has to be a serious mistake. Either the martyrs died for a mere semantic misunderstanding which has suddenly been cleared up in our day or else this new acceptance of each other with its profession of unity is a fraud.

The document "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," as we have seen [in earlier chapters of Hunt's book], is one example of how the failure to define terms has created an illusion of unity which in fact doesn't exist at all. Of course, when church leaders of the stature of J.I. Packer, Charles Colson, Pat Robertson, and Bill Bright lead the way, it is only to be expected that millions of Christians, trusting the judgment of such [alleged] stalwarts of the faith, will follow. Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) has promoted for years the delusion that the Roman Catholic gospel is biblical. BILL HYBELS is another leader who, as pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois (which has been called "the most influential church in North America and perhaps the world"), has led multitudes astray in this same direction.

Bill Hybels, who was mentored by Robert Schuller (G.A. Pritchard, Willow Creek Seekers Services: Evaluating a New Way of Doing Church, Baker: 1996, pp. 49-58), "is leading a worldwide movement. Attending a recent Willow Creek training conference ... were over 2,300 church leaders from Australia, the Bahamas, Canada, England, Holland ... India, Japan, Korea ... Norway, Scotland, Sweden, the United States ... [and elsewhere]. ... Willow Creek ... [with] more than two hundred seventy full and part-time staff members ... is currently shaping how church is 'done' for thousands of churches." (Ibid., p. 11) Schuller has said:

"I was the first person to introduce real church growth to the American Church. ... He [Hybels] became the first guy to take these principles, refine them, maximize them to the ultimate length of their potential. ... I am so proud of him ... I think of him as a son. I think of him as one of the greatest things to happen in Christianity in our time. ... Bill Hybels is doing the best job of anybody I know!" (Ibid., p. 56)

MISINFORMATION FROM TRUSTED LEADERS

Pastor Hybels invited a Roman Catholic priest, Fr. Med Laz from Holy Family Church, into his Willow Creek Community Church pulpit to share with the congregation "What Protestants Can Learn from Catholics." In introducing Laz, Hybels told how at Laz's invitation he had spoken to a conference of Catholic leaders at Holy Family and that he had "developed this enormous respect and admiration for this man as a brother in Christ..." (transcribed from audiotape M9010, "What Protestants Can Learn from Catholics,"

Bill Hybels/Fr. Med Lax, 0304, Seeds Tape Ministry, 67 E. Algonquin Rd., South Barrington, IL 60010, a ministry of Willow Creek Community Church). Yet Laz told of "really becoming a Christian" after he was already a priest and that it happened through going to a motel room at 2:00 A.M. to see a young female acquaintance. Tempted to go to bed with her, he resisted the temptation and felt so good at having done so that he knew he was now a Christian. This "testimony" was greeted with enthusiastic applause, (Ibid.) though it was hardly an example of what evangelicals call getting saved and it implied a priesthood made up of men who don't know Christ.

While he admitted that he and the priest didn't agree upon everything, any differences were too minor to mention. Hybels had only praise for Roman Catholicism and its false gospel. He told the congregation, which looks to him for leadership and guidance, "I believe there are some things we can learn from the Catholic Church and I'd like to ask Med ... to tell us what are some of the praiseworthy things of the Roman Catholic Church that you think Protestants can learn from..." (Ibid.)

[Priest] Laz boasted that Mother Teresa was part of the Catholic Church and Hybels implied that Protestants were jealous of that fact. There was not a word concerning her own deficient testimony. Laz also boasted that Covenant House, America's largest crisis shelter for runaways (with six locations), was run by Catholic nuns. Again Hybel's only response was approval.

The tragic truth can be found in a book titled *Am I Going to Heaven?* written by Covenant House director Sister Mary Rose McGeady. The book's title comes from its first story in which Sister McGeady tells of a 17-year-old girl who is about to die:

"She tried to lift her head up from the hospital bed pillow... but she couldn't....

"Sister, I need to know something,' she whispered. 'Please, tell me something.'

"Anything, Michelle,' I said. 'What do you want to know?'

"Sister... am I going to Heaven? Even a street kid like me...?'

"I bent down and hugged her, and told her I knew God had a special place for her. I told her how much I loved her, and how much I believed in her....

"She cried in my arms, and whispered a 'thank you.' The next day, Michelle died in her sleep" (Sr. Mary Rose McGeady, *Am I Going to Heaven?*, Covenant House, 1994, pp. 5-6).

One weeps for Michelle, who wanted to know how she could be assured of heaven and wasn't told! One weeps, too, for the 31,000 broken lives that Covenant House seeks to mend each year, children and youth in desperate need of the answer that Michelle sought but who, like Michelle, are not given it because McGeady and her fellow Catholic nuns do not know the gospel. In McGeady's entire book of heartrending stories, there is no hint of the only solution to the problems she writes about: the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Laz also boasted of Rome's firm commitment to marriage, to which Hybels again gave his full assent. Not a word was said of the more than 60,000 annulments given (for a fee) by the Catholic Church in the United States each year and which make a mockery of marriage (National Catholic Reporter, August 27, 1993). Many annulments are granted for "psychological" reasons such as being raised in a "dysfunctional" family or being "psychologically unprepared" for a marriage that occurred decades before and produced numerous children--the ultimate in hypocrisy and cynicism. Typical is the distress of a

faithful Catholic woman whose Catholic husband was granted an annulment after a 30-year marriage and five children so he could marry again "in the Church" (letter on file).

Sadly enough, some Catholics now file secret letters with their attorneys at the time of marriage, expressing doubts--just in case they later want an annulment. The "PrimeTime" television show of January 6, 1994, dealt with the issue of Catholic annulments. A Catholic priest, as guest, remembered hearing a Church canon lawyer tell him, "Charlie, there isn't a Catholic marriage in the United States that we couldn't annul." A number of women guests told of their ex-husbands, after a divorce, seeking annulments so they could remarry in the Church:

Barbara Zimmerman, married 27 years and mother of five children; Pat Cadigan married 23 years; Sheila Rauch Kennedy, married for 12 years to Congressman Joseph P Kennedy II (Bobby Kennedy's eldest son) and mother of his twin sons (from a transcript of the program). This is mockery and desecration of marriage yet Hybels had nothing but praise for the Catholic "commitment to the sacredness of matrimony."

God said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). Tragically, Christian leaders who ought to be providing, along with the truth of Cod's Word, the factual knowledge that would help to keep evangelicals from today's ecumenical delusion are withholding it.